

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the following claims:

1) (Previously Presented) A system for permitting a seeking entity to establish a new business relationship with a sought entity, the system comprising:

a computer including a storage for storing data and instructions and a processor for executing instructions stored in the storage; the storage containing instructions corresponding to:

- a) an inquiry receiving component for receiving an inquiry from the seeking entity;
- b) a response receiving component for receiving a response indicating an existing relationship between the sought entity and an intermediate entity; and
- c) a confirming component for confirming, based on the response, that the new relationship may be established, the response being indicative of a trust level of the sought entity by the intermediate entity regarding the existing relationship;
- d) a verification component for determining whether information can be shared between entities in accordance with rights management.

2) (Previously Presented) A transitive trust network system including a plurality of interconnected entities for sharing information comprising:

- a) at least one entity trust list containing at least one characteristic of at least two of the entities, a level of trust being gauged by the at least one characteristic; and
- b) at least one transactional trust list containing at least one parameter relative to an exchange between at least two of the entities through at least one degree of separation between the entities, the at least one parameter comprising a proxy parameter, the proxy parameter being indicative of an action that a trusted party can perform on behalf of a trusting party;

wherein the system retrieves information from the entity trust list and the transactional trust list in order to provide a framework for at least two of the entities to establish relationships between one another.

3) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 2, wherein the plurality of interconnected entities correspond to nodes on a network.

4) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 3, wherein the network is a wide area network.

5) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 3, wherein the network is the Internet.

6) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 3, wherein the entities are business entities, and wherein the system provides a framework for the business entities to discover, validate and establish business relationships over the network.

7) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 2, wherein at least two entities have capabilities of sharing information about other entities, each of the other entities being at least one of a business partner and a known contact.

8) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 2, wherein the entity trust list contains, for a respective entity, at least one of: names of known entities and identifying characteristics thereof; previous transactions between the respective entity and other entities; historical transactions between the respective entity and other entities; quality ratings of the historical transactions; overall rating of other entities; and map of entity relationships.

9) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 8, wherein the map of entity relationships includes at least information that identifies entities and which other entities they know, and information about how relationships were formed between such entities.

10) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 2, wherein the transactional trust list has proxy trust parameters and activity trust parameters.

11) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 10, wherein the proxy trust parameters include at least: an ability of a respective entity to forward requests to other trusted entities; ability to add new entities as trusted entities; ability to communicate opinions about a predetermined entity to other entities; and ability to dynamically create proxy parameters that are specified by any two cooperating entities.

12) (Previously Presented) The transitive trust network system according to claim 10, wherein activity trust parameters include at least one of: types of transactions a respective entity can handle; activity trust levels; and past activity with a predetermined entity.

13) (Currently Amended) A transitive trust network system including a plurality of interconnected entities for sharing information, the transitive trust network system comprising at least one computer, comprising:

- a) an entity trust list containing at least one characteristic of at least two of the entities, a level of trust being gauged by the at least one characteristic;
- b) a transactional trust list containing at least one parameter relative to an exchange between at least two of the entities through at least one degree of separation between the entities, the at least one parameter comprising a proxy parameter, the proxy parameter being indicative of an action that a trusted party can perform on behalf of a trusting party; and
- c) a capability domain and activity trust level data base for each of the at least two entities, the data base having a plurality of levels of trust and a plurality of entity roles, the capability domain and activity trust data base comprising a plurality of entries, each entry being indexed by an entity role and a level of trust, each said entry being indicative of a corresponding business process;

wherein the system retrieves information from the entity trust list and the transactional trust list in order to provide a framework for at least two of the entities to establish relationships between one another.

14) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 13, wherein each respective role in the plurality of roles defines a respective function that one entity fulfills to another entity.

15) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 13, wherein each respective level of trust in the plurality of levels of trust defines a respective degree of trust between one entity and another entity.

16) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 13, wherein a respective business process of a plurality of business processes is associated with each

combination of a respective role of the plurality of roles and a respective trust level of the plurality of trust levels.

17) (Currently Amended) A transitive trust network system including a plurality of interconnected entities for sharing information, the transitive trust network system comprising at least one computer, comprising: a capability domain and activity trust level data base for each of the at least two entities, the database having a plurality of levels of trust and a plurality of entity roles, the capability domain and activity trust level data base comprising a plurality of entries, each entry being indexed by an entity role and a level of trust, each said entry being indicative of a corresponding business process, wherein the system retrieves information from the entity trust list and the transactional trust list in order to provide a framework for at least two of the entities to establish relationships between one another.

18) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 17, wherein each respective level of trust in the plurality of levels of trust defines a respective degree of trust between one entity and another entity.

19) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 17, wherein each respective role in the plurality of roles defines a respective function that one entity fulfills to another entity.

20) (Original) The transitive trust network system according to claim 17, wherein a respective business process of a plurality of business processes is associated with each combination of a respective role of the plurality of roles and a respective trust level of the plurality of trust levels.

21) (Previously Presented) A method of establishing a new business relationship with a sought entity over a network, the method comprising:

- a) sending an inquiry to an intermediate entity to determine if the intermediate entity has an existing relationship with the sought entity;
- b) receiving a response from the intermediate entity indicating an existing relationship between the sought entity and the intermediate entity; and
- c) establishing the new business relationship with the sought entity based on the response, the response being indicative of a trust level of the sought entity by the

intermediate entity and of a corresponding valuation criterion, the trust level being dependent on the corresponding valuation criterion.

22) (Original) The method of claim 21, further comprising specifying an acceptable degree of separation and determining whether the existing relationship exists within the specified degree of separation.

23) (Previously Presented) A method of establishing a relationship with an unknown company comprising:

- a) querying at least one trusted company to determine the existence of a relationship between the at least one trusted company and the unknown company;
- b) receiving a confirmation of a relationship between the at least one trusted company, the confirmation being indicative of a trust level of the unknown company by one of the at least one trusted company and a corresponding at least one valuation criterion, the trust level of the unknown company being dependent on the corresponding at least one valuation criterion; and
- c) establishing a relationship with the unknown company in response to receiving the confirmation.

24) (Previously Presented) A method of establishing relationships between at least two entities comprising the steps of:

- a) receiving at a second entity a contact identifying a first entity;
- b) checking a list of trusted entities by the second entity to determine if the first entity is a trusted entity;
- c) querying, if the first entity is not a trusted entity and if a proxy parameter is indicative that trusted entities are permitted to forward requests to other trusted parties, the trusted entities and specifying a predetermined degree of separation; and
- d) establishing a relationship between the first and second entities when the first entity is known by at least one respective entity of the trusted entities, the relationship being based on information from one of the trusted entities, the information being indicative of a trust level about the first entity.

25) (Original) The method according to claim 24, wherein the method further comprises providing a capability domain and activity trust level data base for each of entities, the database having a plurality of levels of trust and a plurality of entity roles.

26) (Original) The method according to claim 25, wherein each respective role in the plurality of roles defines a respective function that one entity fulfills to another entity.

27) (Original) The method according to claim 25, wherein each respective level of trust in the plurality of levels of trust defines a respective degree of trust between one entity and another entity.

28) (Original) The method according to claim 25, wherein a respective business process of a plurality of business processes is associated with each combination of a respective role of the plurality of roles and a respective trust level of the plurality of trust levels.

29) (Original) The method according to claim 24, wherein the method further comprises providing a capability domain and activity trust level database for each of entities, the matrix having a plurality of levels of trust and a plurality of entity roles.

30) (Previously Presented) A method in a transitive trust network for providing a framework for at least two entities to establish relationships between one another, comprising the steps of:

- a) receiving at a second entity a contact identifying a first entity;
- b) checking a list of trusted entities, associated with the second entity, by the second entity to determine if the first entity is a trusted entity;
- c) querying, if the first entity is not a trusted entity and if a proxy parameter is indicative that trusted entities are permitted to forward requests to other trusted parties, by the second entity at least a third entity of the trusted entities associated with the second entity, and specifying a predetermined degree of separation;
- d) checking a list of trusted entities, associated with the third entity, by the third entity to determine if the first entity is a trusted entity;
- e) continuing querying and checking, if the first entity is not a trusted entity, until a maximum separation of the degree of separation is reached or until the first entity is known to a respective trusted entity; and

f) establishing a relationship between the first and second entities when the first entity is known by at least one respective entity of the trusted entities, the relationship being based on information from one of the least one respective entity, the information being indicative of a level of trust about the first entity.

31) (Original) The method according to claim 30, wherein the method further comprises providing a capability domain and activity trust level data base for each of the entities, the data base having a plurality of levels of trust and a plurality of entity roles.

32) (Original) The method according to claim 31, wherein each respective role in the plurality of roles defines a respective function that one entity fulfills to another entity.

33) (Original) The method according to claim 31, wherein each respective level of trust in the plurality of levels of trust defines a respective degree of trust between one entity and another entity.

34) (Original) The method according to claim 31, wherein a respective business process of a plurality of business processes is associated with each combination of a respective role of the plurality of roles and a respective trust level of the plurality of trust levels.

35) (Previously Presented) A method in a transitive trust network for providing a framework for Companies to establish relationships between one another, comprising the steps of:

- a) contacting a first company by a second company regarding a potential relationship;
- b) checking, by the first company, a trusted user list thereof and determining if the second company is known to the first company;
- c) querying, by the first company when the second company is unknown, companies that are trusted users thereof to determine who is available for peer requests;
- d) notifying, by a third company, the first company that the third company is an active peer;
- e) verifying, by the third company, a rights management model that exists between the third company and the first company;

- f) querying, by the first company, the third company to determine if the second company is known to the third company, specifying a maximum of a predetermined number of degrees of separation;
- g) querying, by the third company when the second company is unknown, companies that are trusted users thereof to determine who is available for peer requests;
- h) forwarding, by the third company, based on a respective list of peers thereof and a trust agreement between the first company and the third company, a "Do You Know" query to further Companies on behalf of the first company, verifying rights management models between all peers;
- i) verifying by the further Companies the rights management model and determining if any of the further Companies know the second company;
- j) querying, by a respective company of the further Companies when the respective company knows the second company, the second company to determine if the second company is active for peer requests;
- k) responding by the respective company to the third company with an affirmative on knowing the second company, in response to the "Do You Know" query;
- l) notifying, by the third company, the first company that the third company knows the second company through the predetermined number of degrees of separation, and passing transitive trust rights to the first company;
- m) establishing, by the first company, contact with the respective company through the trust passed by the third company;
- n) querying, by the first company, the further company for an "opinion" on the second company, the further company providing feedback based on rights rules; and
- o) establishing, by the first company, a relationship with the second company based on the feedback from the further company.

36) (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium for use in a transitive trust network for providing a framework for at least two of the entities to establish relationships between one another, the computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the steps comprising:

- a) receiving at a second entity a contact identifying a first entity;

- b) checking a list of trusted entities by the second entity to determine if the first entity is a trusted entity;
- c) querying, if the first entity is not a trusted entity and if a proxy parameter is indicative that trusted entities are permitted to forward requests to other trusted parties, the trusted entities and specifying a predetermined degree of separation; and
- d) establishing a relationship between the first and second entities when the first entity is known by at least one respective entity of the trusted entities, the relationship being based on information from one of the at least one respective entity, the information being indicative of a level of trust about the first entity.

37) (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a data structure comprising:

- a) a capability domain having a plurality of entity roles within a predetermined degree of separation; and
- b) an activity trust domain having a plurality of levels of trust;
- c) a respective business process of a plurality of business processes being associated with each combination of a respective role of the plurality of roles and a respective trust level of the plurality of trust levels, wherein the data structure is indexed by the capability domain and the activity trust domain to obtain a corresponding business process.

38) (Original) The computer-readable medium having stored thereon a data structure according to claim 37, wherein each respective role in the plurality of roles defines a respective function that one entity fulfills to another entity.

39) (Original) The computer-readable medium having stored thereon a data structure according to claim 37, wherein each respective level of trust in the plurality of levels of trust defines a respective degree of trust between one entity and another entity.

40) (Previously Presented) The transitive trust network system of claim 13, wherein the corresponding business process is selected from a group consisting of a design process, a source process, a plan process, a buy process, a make process, a sell process, a fulfill process, and a service process.

41) (Previously Presented) The transitive trust network system of claim 13, wherein the entity trust list includes an overall trust score between two entities, the overall trust score being determined from an associated plurality of entries of the capability domain and activity trust level data base.

42) (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein each of the trusted entities is associated with an associated trust level that is more trusted than a predetermined minimum trust level, wherein the predetermined minimum trust level is established by an associated proxy parameter.

43) (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, wherein the third entity is associated with an associated trust level that is more trusted than a predetermined minimum trust level, wherein the predetermined minimum trust level is established by an associated proxy parameter.

44) (Currently Amended) A selected entity that supports establishing a new business relationship with another interconnected entity in a transitive trust network, the selected entity comprising at least one computer, the selected entity comprising:

a trust component that stores a trust level for each directly interconnected entity and at least one corresponding valuation criterion for determining the trust level and that obtains an associated trust level of a sought entity through an interconnected intermediate entity if the sought entity is not directly interconnected to the selected entity, the trust component comprising:

an entity trust portion that includes a first data structure, the first data structure storing a distinguishing characteristic of each said directly interconnected entity, a degree of trust being indicative of the distinguishing characteristic; and

a transactional trust portion that includes a second data structure, the second data structure including a plurality of transactional parameters, the plurality of transactional parameters being indicative of criteria for conducting the new business relationship, the plurality of transactional parameters comprising:

a proxy parameter that is indicative of an activity, the activity being performed by a trusted party on behalf of a trusting party; and

a plurality of activity-trust parameters being indexed by an activity trust domain and a capability domain, the activity trust domain being indicative of an activity trust level, the capability domain being indicative of an activity process level, each activity-trust parameter being indicative of an associated business process; and

a transactional component that provides peer-to-peer capability for sharing information with the other interconnected entity, the transactional component utilizing information from the trust component.